

February 9, 2015

To the Senate Fish and Game Committee

My name is Rocco Carroccia and I am a landowner in area 580, on the eastern slope of the Crazies. We requested a damage hunt for the fall 2013 elk season to address the growing number of elk grazing under our pivot and on our rangeland. Since the beginning of this special permit area elk hunt, we have never charged any elk hunting fees whatsoever, including trespass fees etc. Generally, we would allow 4-8 hunters on our land 1-2 days per week, dependent upon the elk being on our land. My father would go to the trouble of calling people and setting up this weekly hunt, as well as helping people find the elk and retrieve them if successful. When we met with FWP employee Harold Guse to discuss a damage hunt, he informed us this was not sufficient to qualify for a damage hunt.

1. To qualify for a damage hunt in the fall of 2013/winter 2014 we were required to submit an estimate of the hunter days we would allow on our land during the regular elk season. We were told that the FWP required hunters on our land 2 out of every 3 days. After submitting this "bid" to the FWP, we then waited for acceptance or rejection of our offer. We were told any fee hunting for elk would make us ineligible for a damage hunt.

We did not receive official confirmation of a damage hunt until after the regular season ended and we reported our hunter days to the FWP. At that time, we were also informed that 1 of every 5 tags would be valid for bull elk. We requested that all tags be valid for cows and spike bulls, but we informed that the FWP wanted more hunter access to the "Trophy" bulls during this damage hunt.

We, along with 4 other landowners in the 580 area qualified for the damage hunt. We killed 15 cows and 2 bulls that I was aware of during the damage hunt. After participating in this hunt I have the following opinions;

1-A late season hunt (no sign-up required) would allow more hunters access to the elk. This would in turn increase harvest by having a more available hunter base when the elk were accessible.

2- A late season hunt would appeal to more landowners by virtue of less meetings, rules to follow etc., and in turn would open up more land to hunters.

3-For these reasons I believe a late season hunt would be much more effective than a Game Damage Hunt in opening up more private land for hunters, harvesting more elk, and primarily, bringing the elk population to a more sustainable level.

Thank you for your time and effort,
Rocco Carroccia